Be Empty In Order To Be Filled

“Empty yourself of yourself and you will find God.”
-- Mother Evangelista Gaffney

When I was a kid, I kept a small cardboard box hidden under my bed. It was my treasure chest and I filled it with bottle caps, bubblegum cards, small toys, penknives, and anything else my young mind considered worthy of being called treasure. Often, I would sit on the bed and sort through the box, reliving the emotions associated with each item.

A few years ago, I rediscovered my treasure chest while helping my mom clean out the basement. I sat for nearly an hour sorting through the contents, fondly remembering most items, pondering why others had been considered worthy of inclusion. As I had personally placed each item in the box, I knew that all had once been important to me.

With one significant exception, your belief system is a lot like that old treasure chest. When you arrived on this earth, well-meaning individuals began to fill you up with all sorts of notions that you accepted as true without examination. You had little option, as you were initially dependent on those around you to survive.

What might you find if you spent some time today sorting through the contents of your belief system? A few treasures, a few items that might cause you scratch your head, and a whole lot of rubbish. A treasury of items chosen for you by someone else.

Unfortunately, once we were able to think and reason for ourselves, many of us never looked back through our box of beliefs. We built our life on a borrowed foundation comprised of fear, guilt, envy, greed, regret, and countless other self-defeating ideas. Over the years, we continued to build on this false reality.

The individual who chooses self-awareness as a goal will willingly sort through his box of beliefs, scrutinize each and “empty” himself of the unwanted. It’s not a simple process or one that you move through once and then never revisit. Situations change and a set of beliefs and values that once served to protect you can actually harm you if left unexamined for years. Think of an abusive family situation where someone comes to believe that keeping head down and mouth shut will ensure survival. Once removed from the situation, that belief could easily become counter-productive and life limiting.
I recall the story of a professor who commuted for many Sundays from Tokyo to a temple in Kamakura to learn Zen wisdom. One morning, the Zen master was serving tea. He filled the professor’s cup and kept on pouring.

“Sensei!” the professor protested. “It is overflowing!”

To which the master replied, “Like this cup, you are so full of opinions and speculations that there is no room for anything further.”

As in the story above, we must empty ourselves of old self-limiting beliefs in order to grasp new and healthy life-affirming concepts.

Here’s one way to start. Choose a belief statement such as, “I’m not deserving of success.” Ask yourself, “Is the statement true or just someone’s opinion?” Push further, asking, “Does this belief help me to learn, grow, and succeed?” and, “What good reason do I have for keeping this belief?” Finally, “What would I do if I weren’t afraid?”

You had little choice as to what initially went into your belief system. Choose now to empty yourself out and open yourself up to what is true and beneficial to you.